

## The Use of Social Media for English Language Learning: An Exploratory Study of EFL University Students

Tubagus Zam Zam Al Arif

Universitas Jambi, Jl. Lintas Sumatera Jl. Jambi - Muara Bulian No.Km. 15, Mendalo Darat, Kec. Jambi Luar  
Kota, Kabupaten Muaro Jambi, Jambi 36122, Indonesia  
zamzam@unj.ac.id

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of social media in English language learning by the students of English Study Program at Jambi University. This study applied an exploratory study to investigate the use of social media for English language learning. The researcher employed a survey and semi-structured interview in collecting the data. Sixty-seven students participated to answer the questionnaire and ten participants were interviewed, randomly selected from participants who answered the questionnaire. Basic statistical analysis was used to analyze quantitative data from the questionnaire, and the data from interviews were analyzed using phenomenological case analysis combined with coding thematically. The findings indicated that a range of social media especially Instagram and Facebook are used by the students. Consequently, the students spent more time in using social media for general purposes than English learning purposes. However, they showed positive attitudes towards the use of social media in English language learning. The students perceive that social media plays an important role to improve their English language skills. Furthermore, it promotes social media use and encourages students to use social media to improve their English language skills. In addition, the social media, which is mostly used in learning English by the university students of English Study Program at Jambi University, is Instagram, and they usually use the social media for learning English at home.

**Keywords:** English Language Learning, Social Media, University Students

### Introduction

The technological advances have had such a great impact on the field of education especially in learning English as a foreign language. The use of ICT in English language learning can help students to improve their language skills (Khaloufi & Laabidi, 2017). In addition, ICT utilization may empower and motivate learners in English language learning. It urges the teachers to shift their teaching styles to be more active, flexible, effective, and student-centred in order to sharpen their critical thinking skills (Asmara, et.al, 2019). Not to mention, the ICT use can provide some opportunities for collaboration and interaction in the English



language learning process, and also the learning needs to be scaffolded for learners to benefit from such opportunities (Murray, 2005).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is more commonly used in language learning and teaching in the last decade. ICT refers to the computer-based technologies and internet-based technologies, which is used for creating, storing, displaying and sharing information. ICT provides a context for human-human and human-machine communication, and it provides a context for information production, display, delivery, and sharing. In the context of EFL, ICT can provide English language learners with opportunities for interaction to native speakers through ICT tools such as e-mail, social media like Facebook, Instagram, and video-based communication like Skype (Annamalai, 2017).

One form of ICT is social media, it is one of the results of the advance of technology (Liu, 2010). Social media is also a set of tools that allow people to establish and to engage a relationship. Social media is one of the technologies that mostly used by people around the world, starting from the young learner to old people. For the university students, they used social media in various situation in their daily activities(Al Arif, 2019).

Social media is a tool of information and communication technology used by people to communicate online. Social media is also one famous platform used by people of every age and level. Social media is a thing as a result of the advanced of technology nowadays (Monica & Anamaria, 2014). According to (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), social media is a group of internet application that allows the creation of various content in the world. There are many kinds of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, etc. These kinds of social media are easy to be signed up for free. It is also one of the reasons why most people use these social media.

Many kinds of social media appear in the last decade, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, etc (Monica & Anamaria, 2014). These kinds of social media are often used by people especially the college students because they are fun things for them. As stated by Chou (2014), social media has some characteristics such as interactivity, platform quality, knowledge sharing mechanism. Therefore, through social media, students can do a lot of things. For example, they can contact and make friends with others from every different place, city, and country. As users, students can find some pictures or video about the situation in this world from different countries through social media like Instagram. Students know how to update information about what happens in their environment faster through social media than other media like a newspaper. In addition, the students can learn the English language from social media.

In the EFL context, the use of social media provides some opportunities to develop students' English language skills. It is the fact that English is one of the languages that mostly used in social media, because English is known as international languages that is used all over the world to communicate each other. English in Indonesia is used by people especially the students as the foreign language, where the students will get English and learn English in just certain places like schools, courses, or universities as one of the available subjects in that places. English Learners use their mobilephone in which social media to



communicate each other and they believe that mobile learning can facilitate them to learn anywhere and anytime (Ayuningtyas, 2018). They have a positive perception on the usage of ICT for English language learning (Lizamuddin, Asib, & Ngadiso, 2019).

In this study, the researcher focused on discussing the university students who undertake English Education program. The researcher is motivated to do this research because it is known that the student in English major has to use English starting from a daily discussion in the class, giving explanations, presentation, assignments, tasks, and examination.

Based on the preliminary research, the university students in English Education Study Program are not interested in reading English book in the library, discussing some topics on English with their friends, learning English through other media like watching TV or watching some educational videos. However, the fact showed that most students in this major like to use their social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube to find some English words and sentences so that they can use the words. Sometimes, the students can use the words and sentences when they speak with their friends. Those words are the words that usually appeared in social media. In addition, this might also happen because the settings of social media mostly are in the English language. Then, because of the college students mostly use social media, and they use it most of the time. This makes the students remember the words to learn the language easier than using other media (books, go to a library, newspaper, etc).

Consequently, this study was intended to examine the use of social media in English language learning by the students of English Study Program at Jambi University. To achieve the purpose of this study, the research attempt to answer these questions:

- 1). What kinds of social media are mostly used in learning English by the students?
- 2). How do the students use social media in learning English?

## Method

For this study, an exploratory study was applied to investigate a detailed and deep analysis on the use of social media in English language learning by the students of English Study Program at Jambi University. The researcher used purposive sampling to find the participants, because the participants were undertaking ICT for Education course in academic year 2018-2019. It means that the researcher select participants because the participants can purposefully inform an understanding of the research issues (Creswell, 2014). Sixty-seven participants of the third semester of English Study Program at Jambi University in Academic Year 2018-2019 involved in this study to answer the questionnaire. For semi-structured interview, the researcher has chosen 10 students (5 male and 5 female students), who have answered the questionnaire.

The data of this study came from questionnaire and semi-structured interview, a total 67 participants who were previously and officially invited by the



researcher were voluntarily involved in this study. For the interview session, there were some questions in this part which includes 5 questions of kind of social media used in learning English and 6 questions of use of social media in learning English. The questions were asked to each participant in around 20 to 30 minutes. In the process of getting data through interview, the researcher recorded all the conversation during the interview session. The interview protocol designed to follow up on the questionnaire which explored respondents' use of social media in greater depth. Moreover, the participants who participated in interview session answered the following questions:

1. What kind of social media do you have?
2. What kinds of social media do you use mostly in learning English?
3. When do you usually use your social media in learning English?
4. How frequently do you usually use your social media in learning English?
5. What are the disadvantages of using social media in learning English for you?
6. What are the advantages of using social media in learning English?
7. In what learning English activities do you use social media for the academic purposes?
8. Who recommended you to use social media in learning English?
9. How can the social media help you in learning English?
10. How can the social media influence you in learning English?
11. How the effectiveness of using social media in learning English for you?

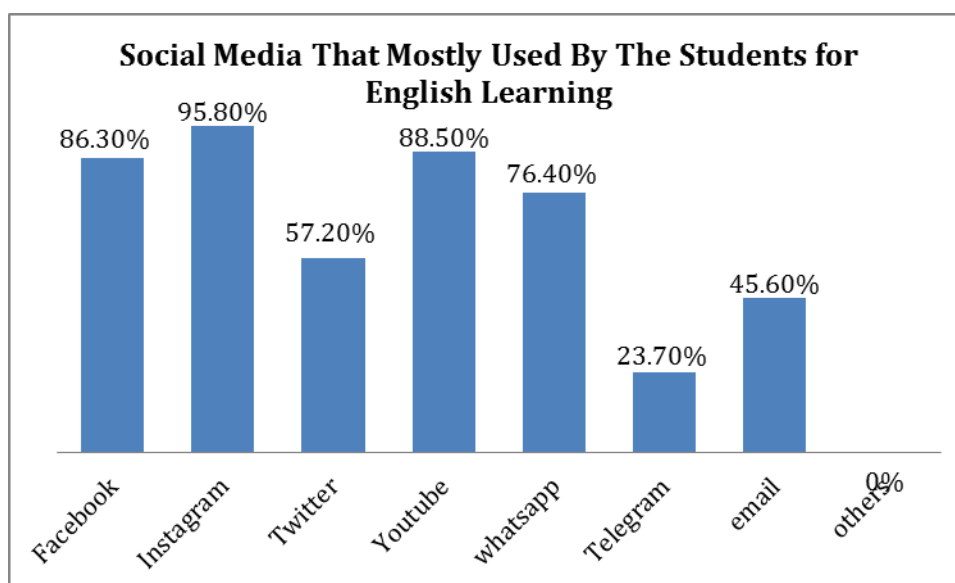
The data from questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics through frequency and percentage. The data from interview were analyzed using phenomenological case analysis combined with coding thematically.

## Findings and discussion

### Quantitative Result

To answer the first research question "What kinds of social media which are mostly used in learning English by the students?" the researcher used a survey in obtaining the data. The result of data analysis from survey obtained that Instagram is one of social media that mostly used by the students in learning English.





**Figure 1. Social Media That Mostly Used By The Students for Learning English**

The frequency of the use of social media for English language learning purposes can be seen at figure 1 above. Many respondents (95.8%) claimed that they use Instagram for English language learning purposes. The next, 88.5% of respondents reported that they use Youtube for learning English, and 86.3 % use Facebook for learning English. On the other hand, the minority of participants use email and telegram for learning English (45.6% and 23.7% respectively).

There is an interesting phenomenon in relation to social media use among Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook for English language learning purposes. The majority of the students tend to use Instagram than Facebook and Youtube. Apparently, there are some students who use Telegram ELL purposes.

### Qualitative Result

The researcher organized the analysis and discussion around students perception and the context in which the advantages they perceived on using social media for English language learning. The following table showed some key themes and sub-themes:



Table 1. Theme and Sub-theme of the Research

No	Themes	Sub-Theme	Examples
1	Kinds of Social Media	Instagram Facebook Twitter	I am used to open Facebook to join in an English learning forum (Int_3)
2	Activities	-. Discussion -. Communication	We always discuss with our friends about English learning, assignment or task by using social media (Int_7)
3	Motivation	-. Self-directed learning -. Interesting	With social media, we can share our experience, knowledge, even task... and we can learn or practice by ourselves. (Int_2)
4	Improve English Skills	-. Improve reading skill -. Improve listening skill -. Improve speaking Skill -. Improve writing skill -. Enhance vocabulary -. Improve pronunciation -. Enhance Grammar Mastery	Social media, I use it every day. I can practice, reading, speaking, and listening English language easily. (Int_5)
5	Effectiveness	-. Effective -. Easy to understand -. Easy to be practiced	I think that social media helps me to learn more effective. (Int_9)

In this research, there are ten participants, they are five female participants and five male participants. All the participants were given pseudonym. They were Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, Student 4, Student 5, Student 6, Student 7, Student 8, Student 9, and Student 10.

Kinds of social media resulted from several social media that the participants used for learning English. The applications of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are three kinds of social media that commonly used by the students. The comments that participants made during the interview, for instance;

*I have some social media likes Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. But, I am used to open Facebook to join in an English learning forum (Int\_3)*



For activities category, participants expressed that they always make a discussion and communication in the English language learning by using social media. The analysis found that all participants often discuss and communicate each other with English. For instance, one of the participants, Int\_7, expressed,

*We always discuss with our friends about English learning, assignment or task by using social media (Int\_7)*

For the motivation category, students mentioned about self-directed learning and interested in English language learning using social media. As one student expressed;

*With social media, we can share our experience, knowledge, even task... and we can learn or practice by ourselves. (Int\_2)*

The fourth category was improving English skills, defined as students' learning via various sort of media social tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These tools provide some benefits to help the students develop their English skills. As a student mentioned;

*Social media, I use it every day. I can practice, reading, speaking, and listening English language easily. (Int\_5)*

The last category was effectiveness, defined as students' learning via various sort of ICT tools such as website, online materials, and YouTube. These tools provide some benefits to help the students understanding English learning materials easily, and makes the English language learning more effective. For instance, a students mentioned;

*I think that social media helps me to learn English more effective. Because media social provide some opportunities for us to explore about English easily. (Int\_9)*

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions on the advantages of using social media for English language learning. As we know that this research has two instruments the data and information about the using of social media in learning English as a foreign language. They are the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. From the questionnaire, it showed that the majority of the students used Instagram for English language learning purposes. and the minority of the students use telegram for ELL.

The result of the interview session indicated that there were 5 themes. They are; 1). Kinds of social media. Kinds of social media which used in learning English by the students with the sub-themes Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. 2). Activities. The activities in using social media in learning English, with sub-themes discussion and communication. 3). Motivation. The use of Social media can improve students' motivation, with sub themes self directed learning and





interesting. 4). Improving English language skills. The use of social media can improve students' English skills with sub themes improve Reading skill, speaking skill, pronunciation, Grammar, and vocabulary. 5). The last is effectiveness. The use of social media can make ELL more effective with sub themes effective, easy to understand, and easy to be practiced.

The finding from questionnaire was in agreement with the previous study by Monica & Anamaria (2014), social media is also one famous thing which is used by people of every age and level. Social media is a thing as a result of the advanced of technology nowadays. There are seven kinds of social media discussed in this research they are, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, Whatsapp, Email, and Telegram. However, the result of the questionnaire showed that the participants of this study mostly used Instagram for learning English. Then, only the minority of the students used email and telegram to help them in English language learning.

Instagram is one of the famous social media nowadays used by many people, especially for young learners (Al-Ali, 2010). This also become the basic principle showed that the most participants in this study used Instagram to learn English. He also explained that Instagram is a social media that contain some photos and videos. This could be the reason why most people are interest to use Instagram in English language learning.

The use of social media provides some opportunities for the students to practice their English skills. Social media was very beneficial for students in improving their ability of critical thinking. The majority of participants stated that the use of social media enabled them to practice English skills, because they can make a discussion and communication both oral and written English language. After that, the using of social media also can be seen in any kind of activities in the class, since it is known that learning using social media can improve the knowledge of the students' especially in learning English (Balbay & Kilis, 2017). The activity that the participants can use social media in learning English is a discussion group. In addition, as found in this study that social media can help the students in learning English for communication, discussion, interaction, and doing or submitting the assignment (Habibi et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that Students often use social media including Instagram, Youtube, and Fcaebook for English language learning. The social media which are mostly used by the students in learning English is Instagram. The university students use social media in learning English at Jambi University when they have spare time at home, or when the lecturer let them use it in the class, especially for the group discussion. The social media help the students to improve their English skills from the content of the social media that is more varied and this encourages students in English language learning using social media.

Furthermore, the positive impacts of social media should be considered to improve the quality of students in acquiring English language. In the context of EFL university students the integration of social media must be counted to





improve the students' language skills through appropriate kinds of social media to be used in English language learning and teaching.

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